

Rule 13-4 – Ball in Hazard
(R & A Decisions on the Rules of Golf 2008 – 2009)

13-4/0.5 Meaning of “Test the Condition of the Hazard” in Rule 13-4a

Q – What is meant by “test the condition of the hazard” in Rule 13-4a?

A – The term covers all actions by which the player could gain more information about the hazard than could be gained from taking his¹ stance for the stroke to be made, bearing in mind that a certain amount of digging in with the feet in the sand or soil is permitted when taking the stance for a stroke.

Examples² of actions that **would not constitute testing the condition** of the hazard include the following:

- Placing an object, such as clubs or a rake, in the hazard;
- Leaning on an object (other than a club) such as a rake while it is touching the ground in the hazard or water in a water hazard;

Examples³ of actions that **would constitute testing the condition** of the hazard in breach of Rule 13-4a includes the following:

- Intentionally sticking an object, such as a rake, into sand or soil in the hazard or water in a water hazard (but see Rule 12-1).

13-4/1 Touching Sand in Bunker When Ball Lies Outside Bunker:

Q – A ball lies just outside a bunker. The player takes his stance in the bunker. May the player ground his club on the sand in the bunker or touch the sand during his backswing?

A – Yes. Since the ball was not in or touching the bunker, Rule 13-4 does not apply. However, the player may ground his club only lightly – see Rule 13-2.

13-4/2 Leaning on Club in Hazard While Waiting to Play:

Q – A, whose ball lies in a hazard, casually leans on his club in the hazard while waiting for B to play. What is the ruling?

A – A was in breach of Rule 13-4b for touching the ground in the hazard with his club before making a stroke. The exceptions to Rule 13-4 do not apply.

13-4/3.5 Player Uses Cane or Club to Enter or Leave Hazard When Ball Lies in Hazard:

Q – A player, to prevent falling, uses a cane or club to enter or leave a hazard when his ball lies in the hazard. Is the player in breach of Rule 13-4?

A – No, provided nothing is done which constitutes testing the condition of the hazard or improves the lie of the ball – see Exception 1 to Rule 13-4.

¹ The R&A rules always refer to players as ‘his’, regardless if male or female.

² Not all examples given in the examples above, read complete rule to gain all the knowledge.

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13-4/21 Rake thrown into Bunker Before Stroke:

Q – A player's ball lies in a bunker. He casually throws a rake into the bunker for use after his stroke. The rake does not move his ball or improve the lie of the ball. Does the player incur a penalty?

A – No. Placing a rake in a bunker is permissible. In this case, throwing the rake into the bunker was the equivalent of placing it.

If the rake had moved the ball, the player would incur a penalty of one stroke for causing his ball to move; and the ball would have to be replaced – Rule 18-2a.